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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: CIVIL SOCIETY UNDER PRESSURE FROM JANDARMA IN TUNCELI

1. (SBU) On February 7, 2005, former Tunceli Bar President Huseyin Aygun was reportedly threatened by the Tunceli-based Jandarma Commander in a face-to-face meeting called by the Commander. According to press reports, confirmed by Mr. Aygun in a telcon with post, the Commander accused Aygun of being an "enemy of the Turkish state," and later told Aygun to give up his human rights work if he wanted to avoid having "evidence" about him sent to the prosecutor. Aygun no longer serves as Bar President, but still works as a lawyer in Tunceli. In addition to past advocacy regarding the right of return or compensation for those evicted from their villages in the 1990s, he especially champions language issues, while publishing a small Zaza-language newspaper in Tunceli, an Alevi stronghold.

2. (SBU) Comment: Aygun has been tried and acquitted in the past for such things as aiding an illegal organization, and for stating that students should have, at a minimum, the right to petition for language in their mother tongue (for that he was charged with "praising an act described by law as a crime.") Noteworthy in this week's news is the pattern emerging about how this particular Tunceli-based Commander interacts with members of local government and civil society in the province. This is reportedly but one in a string of similar incidents. The current Tunceli Bar Association president and other Bar members alleged to PO the same Jandarma Commander had threatened a village headman for allegedly supporting terrorism, and added that troops directly under his command are suspected in a Fall 2004 alleged extrajudicial killing in Tunceli. His behavior seems to also be raising eyebrows among European colleagues in Ankara. End comment.